New England Pastor

"One interest will prevail . . . Christ our righteousness."

January/February 2011



The Start of Something Great

How a Soft Voice May Crescendo into a Loud Cry

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Revival, Reformation, and that Third "R"

by Shawn Brace

I have been extremely excited with all the recent talk among us about Revival and Reformation. This seems to be on the hearts and minds of many, starting at the top with Elder Ted Wilson, our recently elected General Conference president. Whether it was in his inaugural GC address in Atlanta, or in his annual council sermon in October, or even in his little note that he left my tiny church in Vermont while passing by on vacation, these two "R's" seem to be his constant theme.

And rightfully so! The Bible is saturated from cover-to-cover with the undeniable call for Revival and Reformation. It was what Israel of old so badly needed, and it is what brought about the former rain on the Day of Pentecost, when thousands were brought to the Lord after the Holy Spirit was poured out.

Of course, this dual theme weighed heavily upon Ellen White's heart as well. One doesn't have to look very far to recognize that this humble lady felt overburdened about the need amongst God's last-day people. In fact, in 1887 she wrote these now famous words, "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work."[1] Fifteen years later, she was still reminding the church of this "most urgent" need, writing that "a revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit."[2]

Clearly, we know our calling. God is eager for revival and reformation amongst us, and He desperately wants to pour out the latter rain.

But I have realized recently that there is a third "R" that is needed as well. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that the first two "R's" really cannot take place until this third "R" happens.

What is that third "R"?

Repentance.

It's that simple.

For the last three or four years I have understood the great need for such a thing to take place, but it has been brought home to me all the more after reading a recently published book by Ron Duffield that has exploded across the Adventist landscape. The book is entitled *The Return of the Latter Rain*.[3] In it, Duffield, a layperson from Washington, documents how, shortly after Ellen White made that "most urgent need" statement in 1887, God was on the verge of pouring out the latter rain and sending forth the loud cry of the third angel. This would lighten the whole earth with God's glory, and usher in the return of Christ.

Sadly, history has clearly demonstrated that we, as a people, did not embrace God's desire to send that latter rain, and accept the wonderful message of Christ and His righteousness. Some people will, no doubt, disagree with Duffield's interpretation of what took place among us, but the proof is in the pudding. One does not need to examine the present climate of Adventism too long to realize that the latter rain has not been poured out, and Revival and Reformation are still needed. After all, we're still here, aren't we?

I write all this, not to beat up on our church. In fact, I have a strong love affair with this remnant body—the very bride of Christ. I raise this topic only to point out that whenever we—or anyone—comes to a fork in a road and we take a wrong turn, the only way to recover what was lost is to return to that very fork and take the right turn. This is what repentance accomplishes. In fact, according to the Hebrew mindset, it is the very definition of repentance, since the Hebrew word that equates with repentance is the word *shuv*, which literally means to "turn around." Thus, as long as we remain on the same road, going in the same direction, Revival and Reformation will not take place, no matter how sincere we are or how much we call for it.

As Duffield points out, "Even though many Jews at the wailing wall still pour out their hearts in prayer that God will send the long hoped for Messiah, their prayers will never be answered, nor *can* they be answered . . . until they are made to realize that the Messiah already came, and with a clear understanding repent of their unbelief."[4]

So, too, with us. Let us not forget that third "R," repenting for also turning away the Messiah in our own latter-day context.

After all, is this not the very message to the Laodicean church? "Therefore be zealous and repent" (Revelation 3:19).

God is eager to do something among us that we can hardly imagine. May we allow His goodness to lead us to repentance (see Romans 2:4) *and* on into the Promised Land!

1 Ellen G. White, "The Church's Great Need," *The Review and Herald,* 22 March 1887.

2 Idem., "The Need of a Revival and a Reformation," *The Review and Herald*, 25 Feb 1902.

3 Ron Duffield, *The Return of the Latter Rain* (4th Angel Publishers, 2010).

4 Ibid., 11.

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Justified by Faith—Part 2

by Ellen White

This article is Part 2. Part 1 appeared in the March/April 2010 issue, also available at newenglandpastormagazine.blogspot.com. Both first appeared in the Bible Students' Library Series, April, 1893.

—Editors

The Lord would have His people sound in the faith—not ignorant of the great salvation so abundantly provided for them. They are not to look forward, thinking that at some future time a great work is to be done for them; for the work is now complete. The believer is not called upon to make his peace with God; he never has nor ever can do this. He is to accept Christ as his peace, for with Christ is God and peace. Christ made an end of sin, bearing its heavy curse in His own body on the tree, and He hath taken away the curse from all those who believe in Him as a personal Saviour. He makes an end of the controlling power of sin in the heart, and the life and character of the believer testify to the genuine character of the grace of Christ. To those that ask Him, Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit; for it is necessary that every believer should be delivered from pollution, as well as from the curse and condemnation of the law. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the sanctification of the truth, the believer becomes fitted for the courts of heaven; for Christ works within us, and His righteousness is upon us. Without this no soul will be entitled to heaven. We would not enjoy heaven unless qualified for its holy atmosphere by the influence of the Spirit and the righteousness of Christ.

In order to be candidates for heaven we must meet the requirement of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself" (Luke 10:27). We can do this only as we grasp by faith the righteousness of Christ. By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect.

The believer is not called upon to make his peace with God; he never has nor ever can do this. He is to accept Christ as his peace, for with Christ is God and peace.

Christ alone is able to do this, for "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:17, 18). Reconciliation means that every barrier between the soul and God is removed, and that the sinner realizes what the pardoning love of God means. By reason of the sacrifice made by Christ for fallen men, God can justly pardon the transgressor who accepts the merits of Christ. Christ was the channel through which the mercy, love, and righteousness might flow from the heart of God to the heart of the sinner. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

In the prophecy of Daniel it was recorded of Christ that He shall "make reconciliation for iniquity, and . . . bring in everlasting righteousness" (Daniel 9:24). Every soul may say: "By His perfect obedience He has satisfied the claims of the law, and my only hope is found in looking to Him as my substitute and surety, who obeyed the law perfectly for me. By faith in His merits I am free from the condemnation of the law. He clothes me with His righteousness, which answers all the demands of the law. I am complete in Him who brings in everlasting righteousness. He presents me to God in the spotless garment of which no thread was woven by any human agent. All is of Christ, and all the glory, honor, and majesty are to be given to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."

Many think that they must wait for a special impulse in order that they may come to Christ; but it is necessary only to come in sincerity of purpose, deciding to accept the offers of mercy and grace that have been extended to us. We are to say: "Christ died to save me. The Lord's desire is that I should be saved, and I will come to Jesus just as I am without delay. I will venture upon the promise. As Christ draws me, I will respond." The apostle says, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Romans 10:10). No one can believe with the heart unto

righteousness, and obtain justification by faith, while continuing the practice of those things which the Word of God forbids, or while neglecting any known duty.

Genuine faith will be manifested in good works; for good works are the fruits of faith. As God works in the heart, and man surrenders his will to God, and cooperates with God, he works out in the life what God works in by the Holy Spirit, and there is harmony between the purpose of the heart and the practice of the life. Every sin must be renounced as the hateful thing that crucified the Lord of life and glory, and the believer must have a progressive experience by continually doing the works of Christ. It is by continual surrender of the will, by continual obedience, that the blessing of justification is retained.

Those who are justified by faith must have a heart to keep the way of the Lord. It is an evidence that a man is not justified by faith when his works do not correspond to his profession. James says, "Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect?" (James 2:22).

The faith that does not produce good works does not justify the soul. "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3).

Imputation of the righteousness of Christ comes through justifying faith, and is the justification for which Paul so earnestly contends. He says: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. . . . Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (Romans 3:20-31).

Grace is unmerited favor, and the believer is justified without any merit of his own, without any claim to offer to God. He is justified through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who stands in the courts of heaven as the sinner's substitute and surety. But while he is justified because of the merit of Christ, he is not free to work unrighteousness. Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. Where faith is, good works appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps. The expression of the countenance reveals their experience, and men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Christ and the believer become one, and His beauty of character is revealed in those who are vitally connected with the Source of power and love. Christ is the great depositary of justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace.

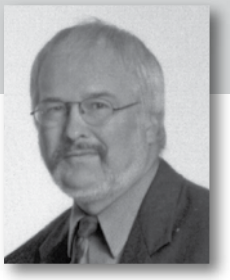
As God works in the heart, and man surrenders his will to God, and cooperates with God, he works out in the life what God works in by the Holy Spirit, and there is harmony between the purpose of the heart and the practice of the life.

All may come to Him, and receive of His fullness. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Then why not cast aside all unbelief and heed the words of Jesus? You want rest; you long for peace. Then say from the heart, "Lord Jesus, I come, because Thou hast given me this invitation." Believe in Him with steadfast faith, and He will save you. Have you been looking unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of your faith? Have you been beholding Him who is full of truth and grace? Have you accepted the peace which Christ alone can give? If you have not, then yield to Him, and through His grace seek for a character that will be noble and elevated. Seek for a constant, resolute, cheerful spirit. Feed on Christ, who is the bread of life, and you will manifest His loveliness of character and spirit.

Ellen G. White *was a prophet in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her ministry spanned over 60 years in the 19th and early 20th century. This excerpt was taken from an article in the July 24, 1888 issue of the* Review and Herald.

Making Sense of the Continuum

by Arnet Mathers



My wife and I will sometimes disagree on something minor, such as whether the color we are looking at is *blue* or *green*. We are both certain that our own judgment of the color is correct and it simply becomes an argument neither of us can win. That we could have different perceptions concerning its "blueness" versus its "greenness" is perfectly understandable because blue and green are next to each other on the color spectrum. At what point in the gradual shift of shades from blue to green does the color become more green than blue?

A similar thing happens in other realms of life as well. Where in the continuum from simple to complex does simple end and complex begin? In the continuum from plain to ornate and showy, where does plain end and ornate begin? In the continuum from thrifty to spendthrift, where does thrifty end and spendthrift begin? In the continuum of building community with God and family to getting lost in one's own pleasure, where does building community end and doing one's own pleasure begin? This type of question can be asked of nearly any discussion of standards we have in the church.

"It is sometimes a difficult matter," Ellen White notes, "to tell just where the line is, [between sin and righteousness]. But those who love God and desire with all their hearts to keep His commandments will be directed by Him. God would not have them depend on any man to be conscience for them."[1]

That is the reason it is such a mistake to believe everyone must have exactly the same understanding "I" have and thus intrude upon the province of conscience to judge one another on matters that lie between the soul and God. "It was in reference to this spirit and practice that Jesus said, 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' That is, do not set yourself up as a standard. Do not make your opinions, your views of duty, your interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for others and in your heart condemn them if they do not come up to your ideal."[2]

The Holy Spirit confirms this again through Paul, "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand" (Romans 14:4, NKJV). Similarly, Ellen White writes, "All cannot see in the same line of vision. You are in danger of making a world of an atom, and an atom of a world."[3]

If we do "the right thing" (even if it is the right thing) because we fear someone else's opinion of us, or because someone whose opinion we trust more than our own says so, then we are no longer obeying God, but following man instead and exalting man to the place of God.

We must each have our own faith relationship with God. If we do "the right thing" (even if it *is* the right thing) because we fear someone else's opinion of us, or because someone whose opinion we trust more than our own says so, then we are no longer obeying God, but following man instead and exalting man to the place of God. Placing human wisdom above God is the essential principle involved in the exaltation of the antichrist. "Whatever is not from faith is sin" (Romans 14:23).

Notice these appropriate words from the pen of inspiration:

- "When man's mind is allowed to become the controlling power, both parties are injured—the one who allows himself to be conscience for another, and the one who permits himself to be controlled by human wisdom."[4]
- "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage" (Galatians 5:1).
- "The Lord will not accept the most splendid service that means the putting of the least yoke upon His people. We are to frame no yokes for our fellow men. God's word to us is that we are to break every yoke."[5]

Yet, we desperately need the body of believers, that we may counsel together. It is indeed a blessing that we cannot all see in the same line, for it gives balance as we counsel together that a subject may be considered from all angles. That man, however, "who endeavors to lead his fellow workers to seek his individual counsel and advice regarding the details of their work, and to learn their duty from him, is in a dangerous position and needs to learn what responsibilities are really comprehended in his office. God has appointed no man to be conscience for his fellowman."[6]

Many come to us with the inquiry: Shall I do this? Shall I engage in that enterprise? Or, in regard to dress, Shall I wear this or that article? I answer them: You profess to be disciples of Christ. Study your Bibles. Read carefully and prayerfully the life of our dear Saviour when He dwelt among men upon the earth. Imitate His life, and you will not be found straying from the narrow path.

We utterly refuse to be conscience for you. If we tell you just what to do, you will look to us to guide you, instead of going directly to Jesus for yourselves. Your experience will be founded in us. You must have an experience for yourselves, which shall be founded in God. Then can you stand amid the perils of the last days and be purified and not consumed by the fire of affliction through which all the saints must pass in order to have the impurities removed from their character preparatory to receiving the finishing touch of immortality.[7]

1 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1980), 320.

2 Idem., *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1955), 124.

3 Idem., *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 897.

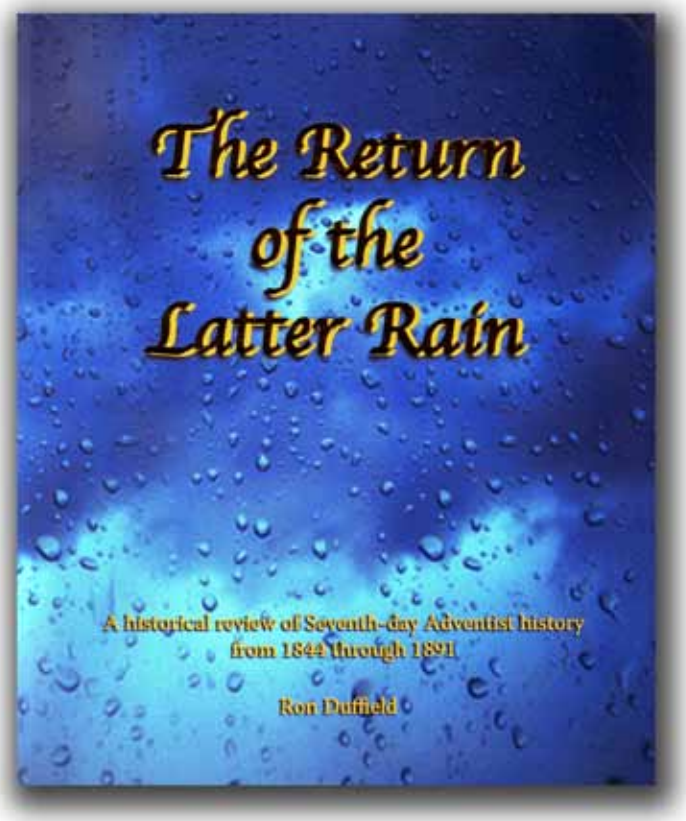
4 Idem., *Manuscript Release 311*, 40.

5 Idem., *Spalding and Magan's Unpublished Manuscript Testimonies of Ellen G.White* (Payson, Ariz: Leaves-Of-Autumn Books, 1985), 367.

6 Idem., *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1962), 477.

7 Idem., *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 119.

Arnet Mathers, and his wife, Lorraine, and foster children, live in Bennington, Vermont. He is a pastor for the Northern New England Conference. From an early age Arnet has had a sense that the part of truth that makes it "moral" is on an inner spiritual and relational plane. That has been his guiding light as he looks more deeply into the teachings of Scripture. Jesus must be all and in all. He worked in publishing ministries before entering pastoral ministry. The past sixteen years he has pastored in southern Illinois and southwestern Vermont.



The Return of the Latter Rain. The title itself implies that the latter rain must have been among us as a people once before. If so, then exactly when was it and when? Is the latter rain what our pentecostal friends describe as "being slain in the Spirit"?

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The Start of Something Great

by Shawn Brace



At the risk of overstating things, I spent two days recently experiencing what I believe is the beginning of something that will change the world. I believe it will have eternal consequences. Along with 11 other people (12 of us total—10 pastors and two spouses), I sat in a little prayer chapel at idyllic Camp Lawroweld in Weld, Maine, surrounded by the beautiful autumn foliage, and simply studied the Word of God for about 16 hours in a two-day period. It was truly heavenly.

A few months ago, Pastor Greg Carter (who pastors the White Memorial Church in Portland, Maine) and I raised the point to our conference administrators that it would be wonderful if the pastors could get together to simply study the Word. Many times at our "workers' meetings," we discuss a lot of valuable things but hardly get a chance to open the Word for serious study. They kindly obliged, and so we invited all of the pastors in the conference to join us for a voluntary two-day Bible Retreat from October 17-18.

To my thinking, I am not sure that this has ever been done in *any* conference in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America—at least not in the last half-century. I might be wrong, but another pastor who is quite familiar with Adventist history also agreed that it has probably been nearly a hundred years since something like this has been done within Adventism. I am quite sure this is at least the case in our conference!

With that being said, I wasn't sure if there would be much interest, and I was hoping that we would get five or six to attend. But the response was overwhelming. Just about every pastor indicated he was interested in attending, but not all could attend, due to scheduling conflicts. About 15 pastors (out of the 30 or so full-time pastors) committed to it, but when it was all said and done, a few of the pastors had to bow-out (due to last-minute conflicts) and we ended up with ten pastors and two spouses.

We studied the book of Galatians and our unpacking of this incredible book was truly amazing. We essentially went verse-by-verse and unpacked the Gospel from every inch of the epistle we could. The Spirit was poured out, and there was great unity among us. This was not to say that we all agreed upon every jot and tittle, but there seemed to be a real desire to not only grapple with the Word in a profound way, but to have it change us.

All in all, there was a great Spirit. God truly led. All seemed to be in agreement that this was the best pastors' meetings they had ever attended, and that we needed more of this.

Simply put, the experience far exceeded my expectations, though I was not really sure what exactly to expect to begin with. From a purely objective point of view, I'm not sure that many of us would have thought that 12 of us could sit in a small chapel (not more than 20 x 20 feet in size) and slowly and deliberately unpack a book for 16 hours without getting bored, annoyed, or frustrated.

Not only did we accomplish this, but I got the feeling that many—if not most—of us could have done it for another 16 hours (especially since we only finished five of the six chapters)!

Specifically as it relates to the book of Galatians, I would like to try to summarize what we discovered, and reflect upon what we all agreed on—as well as the few things we were not in complete agreement on. Some who attended might have a slightly different view of these things, so this is just one man's perspective.

Areas of Agreement

1. The Galatian problem was that they were reverting back to the old covenant way of salvation by their own efforts. Circumcision was not the problem, per se. Their problem was their motivation in getting circumcised (ie., trying to merit salvation and the favor of God).

2. A corollary to this problem was that the Galatians were taking the issue of circumcision and using it as a litmus test to determine who was really a part of God's people. They displayed a judgmental attitude towards others and "persecuted" them who were "born according to the Spirit" (4:29). We recognized that this mentality is still alive and well within our churches, and even in our own thinking at times.

3. A lot of it boils down to control and pride. As human beings, we have this natural (and sinful) desire to control others and to control God. We want to be able to point to ourselves as contributing to our salvation.

4. Contrary to all this, Paul made it clear that there is absolutely nothing that human beings can do to earn, merit, or deserve salvation. It is completely a gift from God, purchased solely by the death of Christ.

5. The purpose of the law is to point out our sin and thus the need for a Savior (3:24). It cannot save us; it can simply reveal to us our desperate need for Christ's righteousness and *His* power to transform our lives.

6. Christ is 100% our righteousness. He places His righteousness upon us and,

because of this, we stand pardoned and forgiven before God.

7. Thus, we experience justification by faith—which is a response of the heart (5:6). This heart-response is based upon an appreciation for God's initiative, sacrifice, and love. And such a response energizes our lives, pushing us forward to live by the Spirit.

8. This appreciation can only be accomplished as we dwell upon the cross, contemplating Christ and Him crucified.

9. Seventh-day Adventists have been blessed with a fuller understanding of the cross, because of our understanding of the nature of man (being naturally mortal) and the nature of hell. When we see Christ's tremendous struggle in Gethsemane, where He was becoming a "curse for us" (3:13) and experiencing the separating of His father from Himself, it gives us a much richer and deeper gratitude for just how far Christ went in redeeming us.

10. Christ has "redeemed" all of us (3:13), and the beautiful reality is that we have all been "crucified with Christ" (2:20). This was done without any request from us. Indeed, it was done even before we were born.

11. In order for Christ to have redeemed us, it was necessary for Him to come to the very point where we were/are, and thus He was "born of a woman, born under the law" (4:4-5). Thus, He took upon Himself our humanity in its weakened condition. This means that He has so closely identified with us that we can draw close to Him, recognizing that He has a heart of compassion for us.

12. In taking upon Himself our humanity in its weakened condition, Christ still retained His divine nature and His will was ever connected to His Father, even from birth. Thus, the human and divine natures were connected, and this can be our experience if we are born again and live by the Spirit.

13. God desires for all of us to be delivered from "the present evil age," (1:4) and to experience true freedom and liberty. He wants us to live by the Spirit.

14. When we live by the Spirit, we do not fulfill the "lusts of the flesh," (5:16) and the fruit of the Spirit is evident in our lives.

15. God wants us to live in a new covenant experience rather than an old covenant experience (4:21-31). These two experiences have always been present and are not speaking of the historical periods that the Bible also identifies (ie., the Old and New Testament).

16. Someone who is living in a new covenant experience is taking God at His word, believing His promises, and cooperating with Him. Someone who is living in an old covenant experience is making promises to God and trying to "help" Him fulfill what He has promised. The actions and behavior of both the old covenant and new covenant experiences may be the same; the difference is the motivation of the heart.

17. As a part of the salvation process, God gives us grace to overcome sin and enjoy a victorious life.

18. Recognizing all these realities extinguishes human pride and results in man, laying his glory in the dust.

19. There was a fairly unified agreement that God has wanted to do more in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and pour out His Spirit in much more abundant measure, but we have resisted the true Gospel. The results of this have driven most within our church to the opposite extremes of legalism and lawlessness. Only a rediscovering, accepting, and embracing of the true Gospel can accomplish a balance of law and grace, and usher in great revival among our people.

Areas of Disagreement

1. What it truly means to be "justified by faith." Some understand the word to be used in the New Testament in a strictly forensic/legal sense, while others maintain that when God declares someone to be righteous, He also "makes" them righteous.

This single area brought about the most disagreement and discussion. Though we all proceeded in Christian love and grace, it did heat up quite a bit. By God's grace, we all maintained our composure and allowed God to help us treat each other with brotherly and sisterly love.

2. At the heart of this disagreement is whether God is going to have a people who have fully matured in their faith—and learned to completely walk by the Spirit—before His Second Coming. Some felt that this necessarily implied there was a different way of salvation for those who will be translated, maintaining that these people would be earning or contributing to their salvation. Those on the opposite side did not agree that it necessarily follows that simply because God would have a people who come to full maturity and learn how to completely overcome sin by His grace, that it means they would be "earning" their salvation or that they would be living by their own righteousness.

3. The latter group proposed that this "fully mature" people would constantly be living by the merits and blood of Christ, while the former group did not see how these two concepts (reaching full maturity and yet still living by God's grace and merits) could be reconciled.

4. A corollary to this concept was a disagreement over the definition of sin and what it means to be a "sinner."

Conclusion

All in all, there was a great Spirit. God truly led. All seemed to be in agreement that this was the best pastors' meetings they had ever attended, and that we needed more of this. A few said they felt extremely energized by the power of God and encountering the Word. All would like to see these types of meetings happen more often, and rather than waiting for a whole year to do it again, perhaps we could meet again in the winter or early spring—maybe even before, and more regularly.

What was appreciated by all, as well, was the way in which we could disagree with one another yet maintain Christian love and humble spirits. Many shy away from digging deeply into the Word in a corporate setting like this, fearing that studying the Bible is divisive and will cause ill feelings towards one another. As one pastor said, however, doing so is only divisive if we "allow it to be."

I also came to some wonderful realizations. Firstly, it is abundantly clear that the Bible is meant to be studied, wrestled and grappled with, in community. It is not meant to be studied in isolation. I came to a much fuller and deeper understanding of Galatians by studying it with others, than I ever would be able to by studying alone. We need one another. We need everyone's perspective and understanding.

With that being said, I was also really excited about the fact that our study of Galatians did not turn into a "this is what I think, and this is how it applies to me," exercise. Too many times, when I study the Bible in a group setting, people are quick to offer their opinion on what the text is saying, and they are equally as quick to apply it to their lives. Very little wrestling with the text itself is done.

Simply put, this was not the case with our retreat. Yes, there was application and yes, of course, there were biases and opinions, but, most of all, there was an honest unpacking of the Word of God and figuring out what the text *meant*, before trying to apply it to our current context.

Most significantly, perhaps, the whole two days were bathed in prayer and true Christian fellowship. We were also blessed with wonderful cooking by Lorraine Mathers, wife of Pastor Arnet Mathers.

I truly feel that God's Spirit was poured out in incredible measure, and that this small, humble gathering was the beginning of a soft voice that will crescendo into a loud cry.

Shawn Brace *pastors four congregations in New Hampshire and Vermont. He and his wife, Camille, and son Camden, live in West Lebanon, New Hampshire. They are expecting their second child in February. When he isn't busy with pastoring, he loves spending time outdoors—especially photographing the beauty of New England.*



Left to right: Ron Nickerson, Jason Disch, Frank Donald, Brenda Johnson, Phil Johnson, Rick Kuntz, Arnet Mathers, Greg Carter, Cornell Preda, Frankie Brownell, Steve Brownell, Shawn Brace

The View from the Pew

by Kristin McGuire



My husband Norm's aunt died recently, and we went to her funeral in a Catholic church. I am assuming most of the people there were Catholic, except for us. At first it was refreshing to be in the large, airy sanctuary with its clean white walls, tiled floors, comfortable seats, and big windows with carefully mitered maple trim. But as the litany ensued, my mind wandered to thoughts of my Jesus and how He might have felt on this occasion.

The death was a relief in a way, considering Norm's cousin had been the primary caregiver of her mother since her father's death, and the aunt had had that dreaded dementia that can be as exasperating as it is hilarious at times. During the time of her mother's dementia, the cousin's husband had to have his leg amputated. Then the much-needed reprieve from being her mother's sole caretaker was replaced with the even more demanding task of taking care of her husband. But this woman is cautiously optimistic that she has heaven's help in all of this. I sensed that when I spoke to her afterwards.

She graciously invited us to her home to swim and to talk. My husband's grandmother had had twelve children, and I tried hard to learn as much about them as I could (even just their names would have been an accomplishment). They weren't all there, of course (in fact, of the twelve, only one is still alive), but I got enough information from the cousins that were there to know my husband's original extended family a little bit better, which made the trip outside the Adventist "bubble" worthwhile.

Getting back to my thoughts during the funeral, I was thinking about how just as there are cultural Adventists, there must also be cultural Catholics—that is, Catholics who conform to all the outward propriety of being a Catholic but don't really understand the significance of the forms of their religion. I was wondering how it was with Aunt Mary. Did she really love her Jesus and "His church" as she knew it, or did she just conform in order to be accepted in her Catholic culture? I hope to find out one day, but, meanwhile, I am still trying to understand God's purposes and plans for His church as I know it so that I can serve Him better.

There seems to be some tension right now regarding the part that we play in our salvation.

There seems to be some tension right now regarding the part that we play in our salvation. My daughter actually had an argument with a Pathfinder leader about it. She told me that Mrs. Schley[1] said that there is absolutely nothing that we can do to merit our salvation (and I agree). Jesus did it all, and that's all there is to it. "Yes, but you have to accept it," my daughter said. And so the tug of war ensued.

I don't really think my daughter believes that we can earn our salvation, but Mrs. Schley made it sound as if once we accept Jesus, we just go on sinning, and that is what my daughter was contesting (and I agree). A respected Adventist pastor writes (about continuing to sin indefinitely) that this is "the worst BAD news we could imagine. That would mean that sin is stronger than God."[2]

The only unifying principle in this ongoing debate is an understanding of the everlasting covenant. David saw it, understood it, and believed it, and so must we in order to be the people God needs us to be. "The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. . . . Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an *everlasting covenant* ordered in all things and sure, for this is all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Samuel 23:3, 4, 5 KJV). David saw that his house was not as it should have been, but he had confidence in God's *everlasting covenant* that what God had commanded He was also able to perform. Galatians 5:17 says that the flesh and the Spirit are at war. Therefore, since grace (God's power) is stronger than sin (the works of the flesh), then sin will be defeated. Good news!

Ellen White put it this way: "The same law that was engraved upon the tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept *the righteousness of Christ*. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth the 'fruits of the Spirit.' Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts."[3]

1 Not her real name.

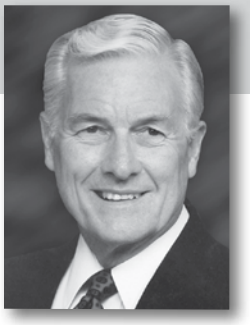
2 Taken from Robert J. Wieldand's "Dial Daily Bread," 17 March 2006.

3 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1958), 372.

Kristin McGuire *writes from Topsham, Maine. She lives there with her husband, Norman, and their four children, Tim, Becky, Shawn, and Gavin. Before becoming active in the local church in music ministry and Sabbath School work, she served in full-time restaurant evangelism for four years and Bible work for three years after that. In 1984 she both graduated from Purdue University with a BS in General Management/Marketing and was baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She enjoys tennis, as well as cooking, walking, reading, and writing.*

Historical Replays Often Necessary

by Herbert Edgar Douglass



For some time now, we have "enjoyed" camera replays during professional sports. Sometimes at critical moments, a coach will call the referees for a time-out. He wants a camera replay so that professional referees may review the play *as the camera saw it.* Sometimes, the decision on the field is reversed because the "facts" on the field overruled the game's referees. At such times, the outcome of the game goes in a different direction.

But replays are needed in many more important situations than a football game. Think of how many people condemned to death have had their sentences reversed by careful, patient men and women who were able to demonstrate that the first decision/conviction was wrong!

Think of how Copernicus and Galileo were restored as men of truth after careful replays of their evidence changed the minds of their Church and the scientific world.

Every church has had to go through the process of having to replay important decisions made at critical moments in their history. The replay process may be temporarily painful. But it always leads to fresh energy and a clearer grasp of its mission and message.

Two historic moments in the Seventh-day Adventist Church that call for camera replays are (1) the momentous issues surveyed in its 1888 General Conference held in Minneapolis and (2) in the General Conference virtual endorsement of the 1957 publication of *Questions on Doctrine.*

Both events have had profound consequences in the years following each historical moment. One of the primary miscalls has occurred since the 1888 Minneapolis General Conference when many to this day have been led to believe that the emphasis on Righteousness (or Justification, same Greek word) by Faith was a stunning, but belated, recovery of Luther's understanding. Nothing is further from the truth! A number of dissertations and books through the years have cemented this miscall in most Adventist minds. A simple, unvarnished camera replay is needed. It would energize serious church members and restore what being an Adventist is meant to be!

Every church has had to go through the process of having to replay important decisions made at critical moments in their history. The replay process may be temporarily painful. But it always leads to fresh energy and a clearer grasp of its mission and message.

Let the facts be seen and heard—not mere, generation after generation of the sad repetition of a faulty miscall! Why is this important? Because the Adventist Church today is divided and confused on exactly what the rubric, "Righteousness by Faith," means. Is it primarily an emphasis on the grace of justification? Or does it include, with equal emphasis, the grace of sanctification, with the whole point of "Righteousness by Faith" focusing on the maturing of willing people who claim God's promises in overcoming sin in their lives? In our day, the intent of "Righteousness by Faith" remains: to prepare willing people for translation!

The second historic moment was the 1957 publication of *Questions on Doctrine (QOD).* Only lately have thoughtful writers described this book as "the *most divisive book* in Seventh-day Adventist history."[1] In their second edition of *Seeking a Sanctuary*, Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart write: "*Questions on Doctrine* raised uncertainties about what Adventists actually believed that made the evangelical era that followed the *most destabilizing* in the church's history."[2]

The key doctrines that raised much alarm in the late 1950s and ever since were the astonishing reversals of a century of Adventist thought on the nature of Christ's humanity and the primary purpose of our Lord's High Priestly work as it affects men and women today. Keen students through the last half century have valiantly called for a "camera recall" of what really happened in 1957.

Bull and Lockhart, with laser precision, recalled how since the 1960s, the leading seminary professor of systematic theology "rarely mentioned the prospect of translation and never discussed the character of the last generation . . . [and] broke the connection between Adventist soteriology and Adventist eschatology."[3] The authors emphasized that "the Second Advent received less emphasis in the preaching of the church than thirty years previously."[4]

A wise lady once wrote: "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."[5]

What really does truth have to fear from camera replays?

1 See George Knight, *Seventh-day Adventists answer questions on doctrine*, annotated ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, c2003), xiii. Emphasis supplied.

2 Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2007), 106. Emphasis supplied.

3 Ibid., 94.

4 Ibid., 93.

5 Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1943), 196. See also Idem., "Lessons from the Life of Solomon—No. 5, Order and Organization," *The Review and Herald*, 12 Oct. 1905.

Herbert E. Douglass, Th.D., is a theologian and retired college administrator. Born in Massachusetts, he was president of Atlantic Union College as well as an associate editor for the Adventist Review. A prolific writer, he has authored over 24 books, including God At Risk; Why Jesus Waits; A Fork in the Road, *and* Messenger of the Lord: the prophetic ministry of Ellen G. White. *He currently resides in Lincoln, California.*





It Is Past Time

By Bill Brace

Revival. According to my trusted dictionary, one definition of *revival* is "restoration to life." I don't think any of us would argue with that thought. In recent days books have begun to appear at our local ABCs with a focus upon this important topic. It has, in the aftermath of our latest General Conference session, become a buzz-word amongst those who are in leadership positions. We are being told it is their desire and burden to have the entire denomination focused upon this great need. It is rightly so. And those in high positions of influence are leading the way through their increased Bible study and prayer at Church headquarters.

Of course, there may be a lingering few among us who would suggest that we, as a denomination, have always had life. They would point to the rapid numerical growth, the great ministry of our educational facilities for the children, youth, and young adults, our expanding mission service, etc., etc. However, if not careful, such a mentality can be erroneous logic. All of the aforementioned cannot be the ultimate proofs that things are OK aboard the "good ship Lollipop."

In the past few months I have been greatly encouraged in witnessing the honest and earnest efforts of pastors and laity alike in New England to reclaim the promises of God that He would revisit us in this humble area of His vineyard. Indeed, in the very locale where "the little flock" had its incubation period, there has been left many encouraging divine promises, one of which appears as an objective for our magazine, "I saw that when the *message* shall increase greatly in power, then the providence of God will open and prepare the way in the East for much more to be accomplished than can be at the present time."[1]

And that brings me to what I believe to be an important point—one which I hope will not escape our notice.

But before I make that point, let me first quote the plea of a late friend of mine who was a famous (or was he, for some, "infamous"?) advocate of late 19th century denominational history. His pleading words continue to ring within my ears since I heard him proclaim it over two decades ago: "Let history speak!"

History records for us a time when deep revival broke out within our ranks, at least for a limited time, with a limited number of individuals, and in limited locales. You may read of them yourself—and I would encourage you to do so, especially as they are described by Ellen White, in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* issues dated February 12, 1889 and March 5, 1889. The former describes what took place at denominational headquarters in Battle Creek, and the latter details what occurred in our own New England hemisphere, South Lancaster. They are "must reads" for anyone who desires to see how it may occur again in our present day. And let it be noted that the major theme at both occasions was justification by faith.

Sadly enough, those revivals were brought to a halt! Not by some governmental edict, nor by pressures of a far-off religious rival. We have been told they were squelched by some within our own ranks and consequently kept, for the most part, from the church as a whole. In more recent times, and one which some of us older "gray beards" may remember, there was an outbreak of revival on our college campuses and academies throughout North America in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Once again, the basis of the movement was justification by faith. Unfortunately, that revival also died out.

Having taken this very brief look at our history leads me to quote the statement an administrator verbalized to me about two decades ago in a visit with him. He observed, "Bill, what we need is a lasting, last revival." Today I am encouraged, perhaps as never before in my ministry, by the belief God is trying now to lead us to a "lasting, last revival."

A little word of caution, though: True revival does not occur if our emphasis is on the law, or louder music, or hoopla that borders on the charismatic, but via a humble and contrite attitude which manifests itself by a deeper searching of God's Word on bended knee. Thus, let us be alert that we may take part in the true revival and not one that leads astray. There will be many false spirits as there are many false christs. In true revival, the focus will not be upon the Holy Spirit, but a Holy Spirit that leads us to Christ. The true Spirit will ever lift up the righteousness of Jesus which reveals Him as the "One altogether lovely" and the "Chiefest among ten thousand" to our hungry and thirsty souls.

May we learn from history. Revival is the start to where God ultimately wants us to go. He has much to reveal to us about Himself and about ourselves. Let us not resist Him.

Even so, come Lord Jesus!

1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1948), 149. Emphasis added.

***Bill Brace** has been involved in urban ministry for over twenty-five years. He pastors Seventh-day Adventist congregations in Braintree and Norwood, Massachusetts. In addition, he maintains an active radio ministry. His program "Portraits of God" is currently heard on several stations around the United States. He and his wife, Melanie, live in Norfolk, Massachusetts, and they have three grown children, one son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, and three beautiful grandchildren.*

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